

FOOD STAMPS TALKING POINTS

HOUSE
REPUBLICAN
CONFERENCE

★ GOP.GOV ★ 109TH Congress ★

DEBORAH PRYCE, CHAIRMAN

Courtesy: House Agriculture Committee

Tightening Eligibility for Food Stamps

The House Agriculture Committee produced a deficit reduction package yielding \$3.7 billion worth of savings from mandatory program reforms. Reforms to the Food Stamp Program that tighten eligibility requirements results in \$844 million in savings.

Facts about the Proposed Savings from Food Stamp Program:

- Funding for Food Stamps has doubled in the past five years, rising from \$17.7 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 to over \$35 billion in FY 2006.
 - The proposed savings for the food stamp program account for about half of one percent of the total food stamp budget.
 - Even with the proposed savings reforms, Food Stamp funding is still expected to increase by more than \$250 million over current levels by FY 2010.
- While food stamps comprise nearly 60 percent of the Agriculture Committee's mandatory spending jurisdiction, it receives less than 25 percent of the total savings under the package.

Who is Affected by the Reforms to the Food Stamp Program?

- Reforms to the Food Stamp program only apply to those who are not qualified under Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and non-citizens.
 - Historically, households which were determined eligible for comparable means-tested benefits were deemed "categorically," or automatically, eligible for food stamps.
 - When TANF was established, categorical food stamp eligibility was extended to households receiving TANF cash assistance as well as those only receiving TANF-funded services.
 - However, in practice, TANF-funded services are extremely diverse, and do not necessarily have eligibility criteria that are comparable to the Food Stamp program.
 - In some cases, States have expanded categorical eligibility for food stamps to those who have received a pamphlet published with TANF funds.

- As a result, households in some states with income and resources well above the regular eligibility criteria are able to receive food stamps.
- The House proposal would limit Food Stamp categorical eligibility to households receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash benefits.
- Households receiving TANF-funded services, but not cash, would no longer be automatically eligible for food stamps, **but could still apply for Food Stamps under regular program rules.**
- Under the Deficit Reduction Act, no child will lose school lunch program benefits. Children who were previously qualified for school lunch programs because of their parents' participation in the food stamp program will still remain eligible for school lunch programs even if their parents no longer qualify for food stamps.

Increasing the Waiting Period for Non-Citizen Eligibility

- The second reform to the program increases the waiting period for food stamp eligibility from 5 years to 7 years for non-citizens. Non-citizens who are 60 years old and above and are currently receiving food stamp benefits on the date of enactment will not be affected. Additionally, non-citizens who have submitted their citizenship application by date of enactment and currently receive food stamps are still eligible to receive food stamps.
 - Under current law, non-citizens that enter the U.S. to attain permanent resident status sign an agreement that they will not become wards of the state.
 - In the original 1996 Welfare Reform Act, the waiting period for non-citizens was set at 10 years but was subsequently reduced to 5 in the 2002 Farm Bill.